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# Complementary and Alternative Medicine and Pain Management

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## Complementary and Alternative Medicine and Pain Management

### Pain

Pain is the most common symptom that brings people to the doctor's office or hospital. Pain can be a symptom all by itself or a secondary symptom occurring from another disease or problem within the body. Treating pain can become a complex issue due to a person's age, the number of other medications they are taking, the types and progression of diseases they are suffering from, or the lack of pain relief from conventional medicine. At these times, alternatives are often sought by the doctor, the patient or concerned family members. Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) is a new term for old therapies that have become popular once again. CAM, sometimes called "natural medicine" or "non-pharmacologic based therapies," plays an important role in pain management by offering alternatives that have fewer side effects and reduced interactions with conventional therapies. The following are five CAM therapies commonly used in pain management.

### Acupuncture

Acupuncture is the 3,000-year-old practice of using the body's own healing energy, or Qi, to relieve pain, and resolve acute and chronic illnesses. It has been used by billions of Chinese as part of "Traditional Chinese Medicine." Conditions treated with acupuncture include: migraines, osteoarthritis, low back pain, sciatica, tendonitis, rotator cuff injuries, frozen shoulders and



many more. A typical treatment involves the patient sitting or laying in a comfortable position, and the physician inserting small needles into specific points on the skin, allowing access to the body's Qi. Treatments are generally painless, and relief can be quick or gradual depending upon the nature of the ailment.

### Therapeutic Massage



Anyone who has had a back rub or their shoulders squeezed knows the benefits of this therapy. Massage can be used to release muscular tension that results from poor posture, or postures a person holds because other parts of their body hurt. For example, walking with a limp may cause back pain on the opposite side of the body. This pain may be muscular and could be relieved by massage. In Connecticut, Therapeutic Massage can only be performed by a licensed therapist.

### Energy Healing

Therapeutic Touch, Reiki and Transformative Energy Healing are other techniques for adding to the energy of a person's body, removing energetic blockages and assisting the patient to balance their energy. Some of these techniques are hands-on (Reiki), while others are practiced and applied without touching the patient (Therapeutic Touch.). Remarkable results can be achieved at the bedside with minimal patient contact.



## Homeopathy

Homeopathy is a 200-year-old therapy based on the principle of like-curing-like. Developed in Germany, its popularity has endured and spread across the globe, and is currently used by physicians in Europe, Russia, India, North and South America. Homeopathy is an energetic medicine and has much to do with quantum physics. Like many energy-based medicines, its exact method of action is still being studied, but current theories suggest it works on a quantum level, utilizing the stored energy within molecules of water. By matching the unique and highly specific symptoms of the individual patient, the practitioner chooses one remedy which best fits the case. For example, while ten people may have neck pain, each one will have unique aspects to the pain such as what it feels like, whether or not it travels to another part of the body, maybe its worse during the day or at night, or in cold weather or only when bending forward. All of these symptoms become important in choosing the remedy.

## Botanical Medicine

Plants as medicine have been a foundation of healing since the earliest ages. Egyptian pharaohs have been found buried with medicinal herbs to heal them if they get injured in the afterlife. All cultures have used the plants in their native lands for food and for healing. Today we have the good fortune to also import plants from other parts of the world. There are many pain relieving herbs such as Devils Claw, Turmeric, Ginger, Boswelina and Bromelain. Some function as anti-inflammatories, others as analgesics. There is significant potential for interaction between herbs and pharmacologic therapy. It is very important to ask patients about everything they are taking, or even better, get them to provide a list. Naturopathic doctors are trained in the use of herbs and their interactions with conventional drug therapies.



## Clinical Nutrition

Specific nutrients in foods can have an impact on pain as well. For example, nightshade vegetables such as tomatoes and eggplant can increase inflammation in rheumatic arthritis. Vitamin B6 can be used to treat the pain of carpal tunnel syndrome. Many people with osteoarthritis already know the benefits of Glucosamine Sulfate. Here again, doctors must ask what nutritional supplements the patient is taking so you can work together to get the best and safest results.

## CAM Therapies Offered at UCHC

Over the past several years, there has been a growing interest in CAM therapies at UCHC. There are doctors, nurses, researchers and students all actively learning about, researching and using CAM modalities. Among them is Dr. Mitch Kennedy, the first Naturopathic Physician to treat patients at the University of Connecticut Health Center.

Dr. Kennedy sees women at the Hollfelder Center for Women's Health, and treats patients using: acupuncture, clinical nutrition, homeopathy, and herbal medicine. Appointments for consultation or treatment can be made by calling 679-2792.

Energy healing practitioners also see patients at the Hollfelder Center, and appointments can be made through the same number.

## UConn Nurses

### Connecticut's Best-Kept Secret

A recent survey of nurses at John Dempsey Hospital revealed that we have several nurses with training in Reiki, ranging in expertise from novice to Reiki Master. Some of our nurses also responded that they have training in Energy Healing, Guided Imagery, Reflexology, Massage Therapy, Therapeutic Touch, and Meditation. One more reason that UConn Nurses are Connecticut's Best-Kept Secret!

*Mitch Kennedy, ND  
C4I Pain Subgroup*

*Hollfelder Center for Women's Health*

*Wednesday afternoons: 679-2792*

*For more information - Avon Office: 673-9954*

### C4I Announcements

- **Upcoming Newsletters:**

<b>July</b>	<b>C4I Culture Updates</b>
<b>August</b>	<b>C4I Performance Improvement Measures</b>

- **The C4I Website is currently under development! Watch for a Broadcast message with a website link soon. In the meantime, you can find information in the UCHC Public Folders under "Collaborative Center for Clinical Care Improvement."**